

SerpentStar

Newsletter for the Australian and New Zealand members of OBOD

Alban Eilir, September 2005



From the Chapter: 'Spring'

THE BREEZE CATCHES THE LEAVES
AND THEY SEEM TO FLY.
WHERE WILL THEY GO,
THESE BIRDS OF GREEN?
THEY SWOOP AND DART
IN THE AIR,
ONLY TO RETURN TO THE BRANCH
BEFORE BEING STARTLED BY THE
NEXT GUST OF WIND.

Songs of the Seasons: A Collection of Zen Poems and Paintings –
by Stephen Cassettari



“...The egg is another obvious fertility symbol, betokening burgeoning life. In several mythologies, a ‘World Egg’ is laid by the Goddess and split open by the sun God. In Hindu tradition, the divine bird laid the cosmic egg on the primordial waters and from it sprang Brahma and the two halves formed heaven and earth. The cosmic tree is sometimes depicted as growing out of an egg floating on the waters of chaos. In Egyptian legend the Nile Goose laid the cosmic egg from which Ra, the sun, sprang. In China the yolk was the sky and the white the earth. The egg is also an emblem of resurrection and the initiate or ‘twice born’, since its laying is one birth, its hatching another.

The egg is closely associated with the serpent, another important springtime emblem. One Egyptian legend says that Kneph, the serpent, produced the egg from his mouth. Orphism, holding the egg to be the mystery of life, creation and resurrection, often depicted the egg surrounded by Ouroboros, the circular serpent with its tail in its mouth. The Druids called the cosmic egg the ‘egg of the serpent’.

The symbolism of the snake is complex. It can be male and phallic or female, representing the power of water- sinuous streams, rivers and healing wells. On one hand it represents the underworld and the powers of night and winter that the sun god must overcome [Bel is sometimes shown with a serpent or dragon, as are Apollo, Pythios and Helios]. On the other hand it symbolises regeneration and the sloughing off of winter; the snake sheds its old skin and emerges renewed and ‘reborn’.... “

Excerpt from "Ostara" by Anna Franklin as found on

<http://www.mvthinolinks.org/enrinoequinox2000~Sanlino.html>



All hail the spring!

The snowdrops are blooming, the tulips are sticking their heads out of the ground, the ducks are laying, the male pigeons are strutting their stuff, and there is a baby friarbird in my backyard learning to fly! Spring is definitely here!

We have had some much-needed rain here in northern NSW, hopefully more will follow for the rest of Australia, especially those areas stricken with drought.

As I write this, it is a few days after hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in the USA. After seeing the news, I am so glad to be living here in Aus, where if there is a disaster people try to help each other, rather than running around with guns shooting people.

What is wrong in the world today? Many people seem to have lost their love for their fellow beings, both human and animal, and only look out for themselves. People just don't seem to respect each other anymore.

I am glad to belong to this wonderful Druid community of ours. A place to belong, to feel safe, where people understand you and share your beliefs and values. If only the rest of the world would join us!!

Take care,

Storm Wolf

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I'm Going Bush

*I'm going bush to be a hermit;
To get away from the cities' vermin;
I'm tired of cruelty and pain;
Violence and selfishness just seem to reign.*

*I turn on the radio or TV;
to find something that might cheer me;
But all I hear is doom and gloom;
I think I'd rather just watch the moon.*

*I thought I'd go and find somewhere –
somewhere where people really care;
and don't try to bring you down;
But is there such a place around?*

*The media love misinterpretation;
What are they doing to our nation?
Lies and deceit, it's all a game;
And no one cares about the pain.*

*Yes, I'm going bush to be a hermit;
And get away from all the journalists;
Their headlines just sensationalise;
And they don't care about their lies.*

*Well I for one have had enough;
I'm going bush to build a hut;
And I'm going bush to be a hermit;
I'm going bush to find life's purpose.*

*Out in the bush I'll be alone;
No TV or telephone;
No newspapers to make me glum;
No bickering or thoughtless actions done.*

*Where I can make a fire at night;
Sleep under the stars, if I've a mind;
I'll watch the birds and learn their songs;
And I'll be happy all day long.*

*Let all the world just pass me by;
I don't want to know the reasons why
people make life so unhappy;
And I might just buy a little puppy!*

*Yes, it's to the bush I'll go;
Away from everyone I know;
Well, away from those who are so cruel;
Where kindness is the only rule.*

*Yes, I'm going bush to be a hermit;
I'm going bush to find life's purpose;
And if you too should feel the need;
Come bush and be alone with me!*

-raelene taylor

THE OBOD ASSEMBLY IN GLASTONBURY

What follows is mostly an account of my experiences but here and there I'll pop in a tip, just in case you are lucky enough to go one day...

Getting there is easy. There are no trains, but a National Bus runs directly from Heathrow and back again. And there are smaller buses that will take you just about anywhere. I arrived from Taunton and struggled with my luggage up the hill to arrive at the little cottage that I had booked a couple of months beforehand. There's plenty of accommodation in Glastonbury, but it's a really good idea to book. The cost per night at Jacoby Cottage was twenty-five pounds per night, which is about average for one person.

I arrived on Friday night and – lucky me - bumped into Susan Jones almost straight away, so I had someone to talk to, and to introduce me to other folks. I think it could be quite a lonely experience if you didn't know anyone, although once things get started on Saturday it's not hard to strike up a conversation with somebody else who is on their own. The Melbourne Grove had excelled themselves by making a banner in time to go up in the Town Hall, along with other Groves and Seed Group banners, and I was helped with putting that up on Friday night. I'm glad that I slept well on Friday because Saturday/Sunday would be a whole different story.

The Assembly actually began on Saturday at 10 a.m. with a guided meditation by Philip. It helped us to focus our intention and unite as a group. We were then given the timetable for the weekend: Bard, Ovate and Druid Groves simultaneously occurring in different parts of the Hall, but each focused on formulating a gift for the Tor Ceremony. Then free time until the Ceremony at 4, except for those who wanted to attend the Preparatory Meeting at 3 with Anna. Following the celebration on the Tor, would come dinner and Eisteddfod in the evening. Sunday morning: Stonehenge Sunrise Ceremony, bus leaving 4:15 a.m., and then a final gathering at 10 to wind up the weekend.

I don't know what took place in the Bardic and Ovate Groves but in the Druid Grove I learned that the Bards were to bring forth something to represent the Animal Kingdom, the Ovates, the Plant Kingdom and the Druids, the Mineral Kingdom. I'm afraid that I couldn't help much with this because the inner journey offered by Ronald Hutton took me in too deeply. Returning quickly and grappling with the task of making a presentation was out of the question. But others did that part really well and we finished up with a dance that expressed our love for the Earth. (I am still processing that awesomely profound journey!).

At 3 o'clock I attended the Preparation Meeting because I wanted to learn everything that I could from the Assembly. I had been asked to represent the West at the Stonehenge Ceremony, so I offered to bless the Circle with water from the Chalice Well. Other folks volunteered to open the Quarters, bless the Circle with Fire, or represent one of the 8 Seasonal Festivals. That was new to me. There were to be two people representing each Festival and to help us decide which one we felt most attuned to, Anna conducted an inner journey through each one. (I continually found myself back on Mt Dandenong, as in the Druid Grove Journey). Anyway, once the parts were sorted out, each pair came up with some key words to represent the Festival they were representing. These would be whispered to each person who passed through their Gateway during the Tor Ceremony, and would represent the Human Kingdom.

As 4 o'clock approached, we robed up and walked to the Chalice Well before beginning the climb up the Tor. This year the ceremony was not conducted at the top, as in other years, but on a flattish part near the entry. Apparently new turf had been laid at the top and we didn't want to disturb it, so there we were among the cows and cow patties. It was a complex ceremony attended by a couple of hundred people and filmed in its entirety by the BBC. I never saw the outcome but the press had ample opportunity to make it as weird or as sacred as they wanted to depending on whether they focused on, say, the Bards being animals, or the Ladies of Avalon. I particularly liked this acknowledgment of Place. Four women were

dressed in grey, and with arms interlocked resembled a cauldron. A roughly clad man spiralled in towards them shouting words to the effect that he didn't believe that there was anything special about this place. Yet each step took him closer to the cauldron until eventually he was swallowed up by it. He completely disappeared. We gazed on in wonder until he eventually re-emerged a transformed human being who spiral-danced his way back to the circumference of the Circle.

Some hours later, having been equally engrossed in the Eisteddfod for some time, I voiced concern about getting some sleep before the 4:15 bus to Stonehenge, and was promptly informed that some people forget about sleep over the Assembly weekend and just keep going until it's over! I wasn't prepared for that and so attempted to get a couple of hours sleep but, of course, my brain was way too active. Just prior to leaving the Eisteddfod I had approached the organizer of the Stonehenge ritual and assured him that I was ready to represent the West in the morning. He looked at me apologetically and said, "We already have someone doing the West, but we have no-one to represent the South, will you do it?" What could I say? South in the Northern Hemisphere (!) - I felt clueless, but hoped something would click into place. He promised me a couple of lines would do, and so I went to bed trying to think of South as Fire, which was not easy.

Glastonbury in the wee small hours of the morning is still light in summer (as it is all over Britain). The seasonal extremities are more marked there than in Melbourne. It never really gets completely dark, so it didn't feel at all strange walking through the streets at 4 a.m. As promised, the bus left at 4:16, full of sleepy-eyed druids determined to pay homage to the great stone circle. Seeing the Tor in the mists of early morning makes getting up worth every bit of the effort. Its mystical power transported me to ancient times and in my dreamy state of consciousness I was happy to indulge in that.

Before entering the inner sanctum of Stonehenge we walked around it and stopped awhile at each of the four cardinal points. The person representing East invited us to take in our surroundings and feel the early morning breezes blowing through the henges. I was really enjoying that when suddenly I realized that South had to speak next. It was useless thinking about running away because Stonehenge is on a large open plain, so I begged Bridget for help instead. She inspired me to follow the lead set by East and invite people to feel the fire in the Earth and the Stones, and it just kind of went from there. The idea of surveying the land before starting a ceremony is one that I will use in the future. It really helps you to attune to the Spirit of Place as you look at it from different angles. Once we had circled the outside and taken in our surroundings, we entered the inner circle from the north east because that's the way that Stonehenge is aligned. During the ceremony, the Oak King was honoured in a much bigger way than we tend to in Melbourne but that is to be expected.

Back at Glastonbury the weekend was brought to a conclusion and was suddenly over. Several people had driven long distances to get there and wanted to start the home journey as quickly as possible. On the basis of this experience, I would advise future travellers to make the most of these 24 hours because that's all you get. Fortunately for me a couple of friends stayed on for a while so that I was able to spend more than just a few fleeting moments with them.

I decided to stay in Glastonbury for ten days altogether and I'm ever so glad that I did. Apart from the magic of the place itself, there are local buses to all sorts of fascinating places like Bath, Cheddar Gorge, Wookey Hole and Stanton Drew. The bus to the latter drops you off at the 'Druid Arms' pub no less! Whilst in Glastonbury I began to discern the sacred geometry of the Isles of Avalon, and my daily walk helped me to feel my way into that. These walks included Wearyall Hill, Bride's Mound and the spiral path up the Tor. A visit to the Old Oaks: Gog and Magog, and the walk from there, along Paradise Lane and down Old Wells Road will stay forever sweet in my mind. A celebration was taking place at the Abbey whilst I was there, so I got to see some Morris Dancing among many other delights. Similarly, it would be hard to overlook the magic of the Chalice Well Gardens with its unique red and white wells and beautiful old yew trees.

If you're ever lucky enough to go to Glastonbury I would recommend these two books: *New Light on the Ancient Mystery of Glastonbury* by John Michell, and *Energy Secrets of Glastonbury Tor* by Nicholas

Mann. Written by men who are passionate about sacred landscape, I wish I could have read them whilst I was actually there instead of one there and the other when I got home, because when I did read the second one, I realized that I'd missed a whole lot of things and I wanted to go back and explore them. It's not that I'm not happy to be home. I am probably more settled now than I ever have been, and that is in part due to Glastonbury. It took me a while to figure out what had changed in me, but gradually I came to understand that my heart had expanded. Prior to going I had begun the work of removing the plants classified as weeds and replacing them with indigenous ones, but within a month of being home I had become fervent about it. My pride in both places had grown and I wanted Australia to be the best Australia it could be, and England to be the best England it could be. In other words, I wanted each to showcase its *particular* beauty. Before leaving, I had no idea that the trip would have this effect on me but I'm really glad that it did.

Elkie White
August 2005



The Cauldron of Avalon



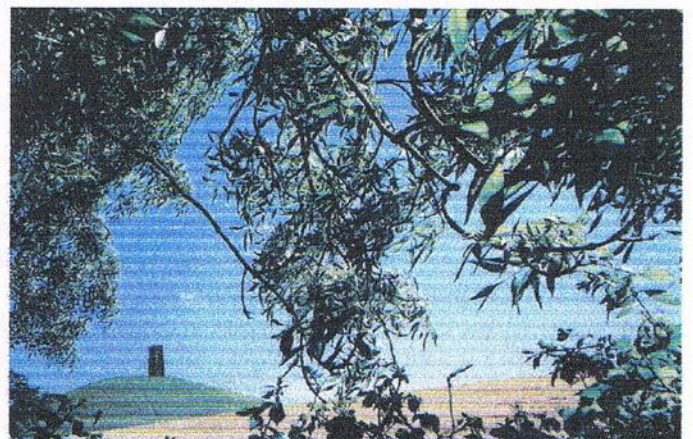
The Arches of the Seasons



Bards Representing the Animal Kingdom



Stonehenge at Sunrise



View of Tor from Paradise Lane

The Eighth Australian Assembly, October 28th, 29th, 30th 2005 update

Preparations are well underway for the Assembly. The opening ceremony will be held at lunch time on Friday, so any late travellers can get there in time.

Keira and Cherry have something up their sleeves for the Sea Dragon, I can't wait to see.

I'm not sure if we are having any initiations yet, but will know soon.

There will be a Naming Ceremony

For everyone who has registered I will send out some information by the end of the month. I noticed on the OBOD website today that there is a camp in the UK on October 29th for Samhain. We could perhaps keep that in mind for our ceremony on the day.

At the first Assembly it was suggested that we bring songs to the Assemblies, can we do this again? We can have a rousing chorus of "known and loved Assembly songs" for future get togethers. It would be nice to have a song for each element. My copy of the songs we sang at Corringal Grove in South Australia have disappeared again, does anyone else have a copy? and could you bring it please?

On Saturday, we will be having a workshop on how the weather in Australia is effected by geographical and other features in the Southern Hemisphere entities that feed and nurture our continent, and perhaps look at the global patterns that link up to our Northern cousins.

Don't forget to bring something to swim in, "runners for walking" on bush tracks, some insect repellent for ceremonies in the bush, and a tee shirt. If we get a good picture, I can turn it or them into transfers and iron them on the shirt as a memento, or celebration of the Assembly.

Thats all for now, looking forward to seeing you all there

Carole

Up dates will be posted at www.carolenielsen.id.au

Username: gathering Password: druidsall



More Rapt (-or) News!

It dawned a crisp Winter's morning – silent, not a breath of wind, mist suspended like a gossamer curtain, through which peeped the denizens of the bush. I walked quickly, breathing in the freshness, enjoying the feel of the damp air caressing my face and watching our dog as he raced ahead with his usual boundless energy and enthusiasm for life.

I sensed, rather than saw, a movement to my right and in a sudden clearing of mist there appeared a bird with an enormous wingspan. He was flying low for such a huge bird, just below the tree tops, then rose effortlessly and headed North. I quickened my pace a little, hoping for a better look, by the appeared to have vanished up toward the mountain. I reached our cross tracks and decided to head West to our dam, now full after good rains, to check which water birds had returned, but something prompted me to glance Northwards.

A bare, dead tree stands starkly a little way up that track and there, perched on its pinnacle, sat a huge, dark brooding shape, watching me calmly, inviting me to approach. I moved slowly and silently up the path hardly daring to breathe. 'Danny', the dog, had no such inhibitions and raced straight past the trunk of the tree, completely unaware of the bird above him. The Eagle, for such it was, seemed highly amused by this and even bent to peer under the branch as Dan sped past below. I could almost hear the bird chuckle as he decided "Too big for prey. Too stupid to be predator!", and turned his attention back to me. I was now only a few feet away from the tree and 'spoke' to him asking what he wanted of me and why he had come. For answer his eyes bored into mine for a magical second or two, he shrugged his powerful shoulders and shook out his massive wings. Then, obviously satisfied, he squatted, had a poop and unhurriedly took off to the West, from whence he came.

We have heard the greeting, 'May the bluebird of happiness poop all over your birthday cake!', but a wedgetail pooping in your path?? I am left wondering. Was it a sign that he had delivered his message, or was it his considered opinion of my worth? The former I hope!

Incidentally this third raptor visitation occurred almost three months to the day since our last one. The first occasion was in January. Then in April, 88 days later came the second at exactly the same time of day, 1.30pm. This latest event occurred on 9th July, 80 days after the second but early morning, soon after dawn. There seems to be a pattern here. The first two encounters were with brown goshawks, fairly common to our property, but we have previously only seen wedgetailed eagles soaring high over us here. Perhaps the most powerful bird was sent last. We will see what the future holds.

Cherry Carroll

SAVING SPRING

A Scandinavian legend, retold by Ilil Arbel (from:
http://www.pantheon.org/areas/folklore/folktales/articles/saving_spring.html)

Once upon a time, the snow kept on falling, the wind howled, and even the oldest people could not remember such a cold winter. March, April, May came, without a single day of sunshine, without a flower or a blade of grass. The villagers could not sow or plant, and feared starvation. In addition, the snowdrifts isolated them from other villages. What happened to Spring?

By June, the mayor called a meeting and the villagers assembled in the town hall. The roaring fire did little to heat the ice-cold large room, and the villagers sat on the wooden benches, rubbing their hands and moving their legs to keep warm. Outside, the storm raged.

"Citizens," said the mayor, his face grim and tired. "I have finally received news from another village. Apparently, Spring is held captive by Old Man Winter, up in the North Pole. Several villages and towns sent their bravest people to rescue her, but none of them returned. They say that further North, entire villages starved and froze to death. They want us to send someone now."

A hush came over the room. No one dared to speak for a long time. Finally, a man named Oscar got up. Very young and alone in the world, he was nevertheless well respected for his honesty and industry. "Mayor," said Oscar. "I will go to the North Pole and see if I can match wits with Old Man Winter."

"Are you sure, Oscar?" asked the mayor. "What can a single young man do against the strength of Old Man Winter?"

"Perhaps it's not strength that will conquer him," said Oscar. "Perhaps perseverance, and cunning, and the love of Spring will serve better."

"Very well," said the mayor. "If nothing is done, starvation is a sure thing. We will outfit you for the trip as best we can, and be with you in spirit."

Within a couple of days, Oscar left for the North Pole, carrying a large bundle of food and warm clothes. Gradually the air grew colder, the wind barely allowed him to trudge on, and the hard snow whipped his face. The landscape around him gleamed white, desolate, and terrifying, but he kept on, lovingly thinking of Spring. However, soon he found it very hard to keep up his spirits as he passed through ruined villages, empty of people and animals, everything frozen to ice. The further North he went, the worst was the devastation.

A few weeks passed, and finally Oscar saw Old Man Winter's huge ice castle looming in the distance. Cautiously approaching the enormous edifice, he determined not to enter through the front door, since he wished to trick Old Man Winter. He started looking for other entrances, but the wide, empty space did not allow any cover, and before he knew what happened three tall,

armoured soldiers surrounded him and dragged him to the palace. They made him enter a spacious room, empty except for a few rabbits, small deer, and guinea pigs, all shivering with cold. Surprised at his environment, Oscar sat down on a bench to rest, and promptly fell asleep.

"Wake up, wake up," said someone next to him. The voice seemed to come from the ground. Oscar opened his eyes, but saw no one. Looking down to search for the invisible creature, his eyes fell on his hands, and to his horror, he saw they were no longer human, but tiger's paws! Jumping up from the bench, he fell heavily on all four, and realized that he had turned into a huge orange tiger. A white rabbit sat a little further away. Bloodthirsty rage suddenly flooded Oscar's thoughts. Forgetting everything, he only knew he was terribly hungry and lunged after the rabbit, but it was too fast. It ran in a zigzag fashion, leading Oscar into a dark corridor.

After a while, Oscar knew he lost the rabbit, and sat down on the rough ground. Confusion and uncertainty mingled in his mind, and slowly, his memory returned and his own actions horrified him. Tears filled his eyes, and he hid his huge head between his paws, shaking with sorrow and shame. "It's all right, my friend" the rabbit's small voice reached him from a niche in the wall, where it was well protected from the tiger's rage, should it rise again. "This is what Old Man Winter does to people when they come here to save Spring. He turns them into animals and they forget their humanity."

"What shall I do?" whispered Oscar. "I don't want to hurt you, or any other person here. What shall I do to remember my humanity and my purpose?"

"There is only one way to remember, and we must do it right now, before you forget again. Give me your paw, and I'll tattoo your name on it. When you are filled again with animal rage, the name will remind you who you are. I have my name tattooed on my paw, and all my friends have theirs, too." Oscar extended his paw obediently into the niche and told the rabbit his name. He suffered the painful tattooing without flinching.

"Who are you, and why did you risk your life to make me come here?" Oscar asked when the treatment was over. The rabbit emerged out of the niche, no longer in need of shelter. "I am Greta," said the rabbit, sitting next to Oscar. "I come from a small village in the North. All the villagers and our animals froze to death, and as the only survivor, I decided to try and help anyone who went to save Spring.

Little did we know what cruel Old Man Winter had in mind. Many people roam the ice fields in their animal form, having completely forgotten who they once were. Saving Spring is our only hope of survival"

"But what can you do? I am sure these soldiers hunt for anyone who had not fully become an animal," said

"We live underground, foraging for food when we can. We are digging a tunnel under the ice castle to reach Spring's jail. But we are too small and weak. Every day I attempt to make contact with a large animal, but until I met you I did not succeed. I am so happy you managed to retain your memory. With your large claws, you can dig faster than any of us, and we will stand behind and collect the dirt and ice."

Greta took Oscar to the hiding place, a dark underground natural cave. It protected the animals from the cold but had no natural light, so they used torches made from wooden sticks and rags dipped in oil. They were terrified at first, but Oscar kept his tattooed paw constantly before his eyes, and they knew he would not hurt them. The animals brought Oscar's bag from the large hall, so everyone shared the good food in it and Oscar rested for a little while. "Show me the tunnel," he then said. "I am anxious to start digging."

The tunnel was surprisingly long, considering the small size of the diggers, and lit with more torches. Greta told him that it took them months to go that far. Oscar started digging with such fury that the animals found it hard to keep up with him as they removed the dirt and ice. He dug for days, often forgetting to eat or sleep, and Greta consulted a map she cleverly drew of the palace and underground area, and showed him the direction he needed to follow.

One day, as Oscar was digging, he suddenly noticed that the tunnel was turning up and he was near the surface. Greta must have made a mistake in her calculations, but it was too late to do anything about it. The frozen ground broke above him and a large piece of ice fell on his head. Oscar collapsed, stunned by the blow, and for a few days hovered between life and death. Greta and the other animals sat by his big body, trying to keep him warm. They had no medicine, no help; they could only watch and wait.

Finally, Oscar opened his eyes. He growled in confusion and anger, not knowing who or where he was. The small animals fled in all directions. Only Greta kept her head. Jumping under his tattooed paw, she shoved it in front of his face, and as soon as he saw his name, Oscar recovered his memory.

"I must repair the opening," said Oscar. "The guards may discover it."

"We already did that when you were ill," said Greta. "We are safe. But I am so sorry, this accident was my fault, I made a mistake in my calculations. Perhaps someone else should try to find the direction, I have failed you."

"Please don't feel this way," said Oscar. "You are the only one here with the talent for maps and for finding directions. What should we do without you? Anyone can make a mistake." The other animals nodded in agreement, and Greta felt better. Work resumed the next day.

When they reached the area just under the jail, Greta asked Oscar to stop digging. "We must recruit more large animals," she said. "We may have to fight with the

others into the game Spring.

Cheerfully risking her life, Greta went every day to the large hall to find a large animal. Eventually, a large wolf was brought in, and Greta repeated the tactics she used with Oscar to make the wolf chase her to the tunnels. Oscar waited for her there, pounced and subdued the wolf, then held it pinned to the ground while Greta tattooed his paw. She did not know the wolf's name, so instead she tattooed the word "Spring," hoping it would work. And indeed as soon as the wolf saw the word, his memory returned.

"I am the leader of a pack of wolves," he said. "My memory comes and goes, so the guards took me back to the hall to finally transform me, but luckily you came on time. My entire pack were human and I know all their names, so we can trick them here and restore their humanity, one by one." They successfully recruited the wolves, a few bears, and a lion, thus creating a small army.

Finally, they reached Spring's jail. Cautiously, Oscar raised his large head out of the tunnel to see her. Spring was locked up behind bars, all made of strong ice, and at least twenty soldiers stood guard around the cell. She slept peacefully under Old Man Winter's enchantment, her golden hair spread around her quiet figure, her green dress still clean and fresh. Even jail could not mar Spring's glory. Still, there were no flowers around her, since they all froze, and Spring without flowers is a sad sight.

They burst out of the tunnel, and the sudden sight of the large group of animals charging at them was so frightening, that the guards did not even try to fight. They scattered and ran for help. The animals had to hurry to finish the job and wake Spring before Old Man Winter himself came to destroy them.

Oscar and the wolves threw themselves against the bars. Again and again they tried, but the bars did not budge. Desperately, he looked at Greta for advice. Were they going to fail after all this effort? Let the world die of cold? "Melt the bars," cried Greta over the screaming and confusion and shoved a torch into Oscar's mouth. He held the torch against one of the bars. To the animal's intense joy, the bar quickly melted! One by one the bars disappeared, and Oscar burst into the jail, followed by the other animals. They stood around Spring, suddenly silent with awe. Spring opened her big blue eyes and looked lovingly at her saviours. Rising from her couch, she stood, swaying lightly, and the air around them began to warm up and fill with a delicious scent. Together they left the jail, violets and snowdrops sprouting out of Spring's hands, hair and long dress, and trailing behind her. The snow melted in little rivulets as she glided toward the ice castle, and suddenly the sun came out from behind the black clouds, pouring light and warmth over the desolate landscape.

Oscar saw Old Man Winter flying out of a window in his silver sleigh and heading toward the group. He looked terrifying in his grey swirling robe and flowing white hair and beard, his hard eyes looking malevolently at the animals. Old Man Winter landed his vehicle and stood before Spring, frowning and holding his magic wand, which was made of diamond-hard ice, towards her. Spring smiled and pointed at it with her delicate finger. "You cannot win again, Old Man Winter," she said in a voice that sounded like a gentle mountain spring mixed with soft breezes and bird calls. "I was asleep when you kidnapped me, and alone. Now I am awake,

and surrounded by loving people. I am now stronger than you, and you know it" Golden light flowed out of her finger and melted the icy magic wand. "Go home, Old Man Winter, and wait for next year. You have done great evil, and you should spend the next few months thinking about your crime and learning to regret it. Do not try to disturb the order of the seasons ever again, because if you continue to do so, Nature will eventually notice and take Her revenge." Old Man Winter looked at the snow melting under his feet, climbed into his sleigh and flew back to the castle, defeated. The animals cheered.

Spring kissed each animal, and immediately it assumed his or her normal human shape. They were all strong, good-looking, and nicely dressed in new outfits, and Oscar noticed that Greta became a beautiful, dark-haired young woman. But this did not surprise him, since he already appreciated her great charm and admired her even when she was a rabbit. "I must go and restore the world," said Spring gently. "Thanks to you, my heroes, all will be well again. Summer and Autumn will follow me, and Old Man Winter will not dare to interfere again." She flew away, trailed by a stream of rose petals that showered the people as they waved at her. And so they said their goodbyes to each other, and all turned toward the town or village they came from. Only Greta and Oscar remained.

"I have nowhere to go," said Greta sorrowfully. "As I told you, my village is gone." Oscar looked at her, and knew that after their adventures together, he never wanted to separate from Greta again. He took her hand in his. Strangely, both of them still had the tattoos on their human hands, a permanent memory of their heroic deed.

Man's Last Playground

In the labyrinths
of the deep
The predators sleep
A jungle of life
Available to man and wife.

The oceans abound
where life is found
The harvest is sound
As ships travel around.

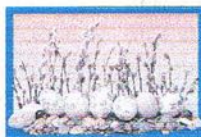
On the world abounds
A rhythm of sound
While the world sleeps
They harvest the deep.

The waves tumble around
where cruise ships are found
And swimmers abound
In man's last playground.

"You can come with me to my village and make it your home," he said. "My friends will welcome you when I tell them how brave you are, and how your cunning saved Spring. I had the physical strength, but I could have never done it without your wisdom."

And so it came to be. Greta and Oscar went back to their village, where everyone welcomed them as heroes. They were soon married on the village green, where wonderful flowers grew again, and lived happily ever after.

Seasonal Recipes



Decorating Eggs

By Waverly Fitzgerald –
www.schooloftheseasons.com



This is one of my favourite ways to celebrate spring. I've decorated eggs with nail polish, with food colouring and vinegar, with commercial egg dyes and with natural dyes. Pauline Campanelli in *The Wheel of the Year* describes many natural substances that dye eggs. One of my favourites is boiling a single onion skin with a few eggs to get a soft orange. A handful of onion skins produces rust, a half teaspoon of turmeric gives a sunny yellow and beet juice and vinegar make pink. If you boil eggs with vinegar and several of the outer leaves of cabbage and allow them to cool overnight, the eggs will be a bright robin's egg blue, but they must be handled carefully since the dye comes off easily.

A few years ago, I finally purchased the appropriate tool, a kitska (I got mine in the art supply department of our local university bookstore), and started making pysanky (Ukrainian Easter eggs). You place a bit of beeswax in the funnel of the kitska, then melt it over a candle flame and draw on the eggshell. It helps to have a lathe to hold the egg if you want absolutely even lines. Begin with a white egg and put wax on all the areas you want to stay white, then dye the egg yellow and cover all the areas with wax which you want to remain yellow, and so forth through orange, red and a dark colour (brown, purple or black). When the egg is done, place it in a low temperature oven for a few minutes to melt the wax, which is then rubbed off to reveal the intricate designs and glowing colours of your egg. I love the delicacy of the designs, the smell of the wax and the candle, and the trance-like quality of the whole process.

This is a great project for doing with a group. In the Ukraine, only women created these special eggs and they did so at night, when the children were asleep. If you want to use the eggs as talismans, they should be raw and whole (not blown out). Decorate them with symbols of the qualities you wish for yourself and your family and friends in the coming year. For example, draw sprouting leaves on an egg and bury it in your garden to help

Children's Page!

Roots and shoots

In the spring, new plants start to grow from seeds. You can watch how tiny roots and shoots grow by soaking bean seeds in a glass jar.

You will need:

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| A big glass jar | Bean seeds |
| Kitchen paper or a paper napkin | Water |
| | A spoon |

What to do

1. Soak any labels off the jar, then rinse it out with cold water. You don't need to dry it

2. Fold the kitchen paper or paper napkin in half. Roll it into a tube and slip it into the jar

3. Press the kitchen paper against the sides of the jar with the handle of the spoon, as shown

4. Peel back part of the paper. Push one of the bean seeds down between the jar and the paper

5. Push two more beans into the jar. Spoon water onto the paper until it is really wet

The beans swell and the outer skins split. Tiny roots start to grow downwards.

Next, small green shoots uncurl and start to grow upwards. You can just see the leaves.

White rootlets grow from the roots and leaves grow

6. Stand the jar in a bright, warm place. Water it every day to keep the paper wet. Watch what happens

Bean plants



Plant the plants in pots or

straight in the garden. Tie them to garden sticks and water them regularly. By the end of the summer you will be able to pick your own beans!

The plants on the right are ready to be planted in pots or in a garden

This page and the next from 'Book of the Seasons'
by Angela Wilkes,
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Maps for southern half of world

These maps show the stars that people in the southern half of the world can see in spring. Facing north, the constellations of Pegasus and Andromeda dominate the sky. The ruby red star Aldebaran shines brightly in the east.

The most famous constellation in the skies of the southern half of the world is Crux, known as the Southern Cross. You cannot see it from the northern half of the world at any time of the year.

M31, just above the horizon, is a spiral-shaped galaxy.

Look out for the cluster of stars known as the Pleiades, or Seven Sisters, in the constellation of Taurus.

